

Revival 536

Chapter 536

All the changes happened in the blink of an eye.

Chen Yi moved fast, snuffing out the candle flame and trying to light a new Ghost Candle in one fluid motion, able to complete the process in less than three seconds. However, even the swiftest action could not fend off the unexpected.

The flame on his lighter had already gone out while he was still gripping the Ghost Candle, which was as pale as the skin of a corpse, in his hand.

Accompanied by a faint stench of decay, an almost paralyzing chill swept over him, continuously assaulting Chen Yi's senses. He deeply understood that the ghost before him was influencing their surroundings, and this cold was not physical because Chen Yi himself was a ghost tamer.

His body temperature was naturally low, so even if he were in a freezer he wouldn't feel uncomfortable.

And yet, Chen Yi felt as though his body was about to freeze.

However, the ground and the environment around him showed no signs of change, with no evidence of icing.

The numb, pale face that Guo Fan turned around wore no expression, the face of a true corpse, its chilling aura proving to others that this was merely a walking cadaver, alien to the other normal people.

But this was not the most terrifying part...

After a moment of horror, Chen Yi quickly recovered. His pupils contracted as he stepped back abruptly and shouted loudly, "Get ready to switch,"

"Roger that," a response came from the dim surroundings.

These were other ghost tamers arranged by headquarters.

The plan to lead the ghost this time was extremely perilous; anticipating problems during the candle exchange, a backup team had been prepared in advance.

"It's over," upon hearing this, Zong Shan's face turned pale as well, his expression one of horror.

Without looking back, he was unaware of the situation behind him, only that it was Chen Yi's turn to replace the Ghost Candle.

He had thought the handover of the second Ghost Candle would proceed smoothly, but the thing he feared most had occurred.

Zong Shan suddenly turned around for a look.

His pupils immediately contracted.

He saw Guo Fan and Chen Yi together with Chen Yi holding the unlit Ghost Candle, preparing to withdraw, but what frightened him even more was that at the far end behind the two, five ghosts, whose movements were uniform and eerily terrifying, were heading straight towards him, ignoring everything else around them.

"Damn it, Chen Yi, are you trying to get me killed?" Zong Shan wanted to curse at that moment.

Because he saw that the Ghost Candle on "Guo Fan" had been extinguished, but the one in his hand was still lit. Now that there was a problem with the candle exchange, he had taken over Guo Fan's role and become the "beacon" for the ghosts.

"I must not die here."

Zong Shan watched as the ghosts approached him, understanding that he could no longer let the Ghost Candle burn. Otherwise, he might be killed in ten seconds.

After all, according to the plan, the Guide should have been Guo Fan.

Only he could have perfectly fended off the ghosts' assault and made it through this path safely.

But this guy had problems from the start, otherwise they wouldn't be in such a mess.

Immediately, Zong Shan looked at the short wick of the white candle in his hand, preparing to blow it out.

"No, you can't blow out the Ghost Candle now. If you do, the ghost will completely lose control," Chen Yi, noticing Zong Shan's predicament, urgently shouted.

"I can't withstand an attack by a ghost of this level. Letting the Ghost Candle burn is like sending me to death," Zong Shan said anxiously; "Moreover, even if I were to endure, it would be meaningless. The situation has already spiraled out of control, you should understand... watch out."

Before he could finish his sentence, his tone suddenly changed, tinged with panic.

Chen Yi, who was rapidly retreating, suddenly stiffened, shuddering through his body.

A lifeless, cold hand abruptly grabbed his arm.

The cold from the corpse penetrated the fabric and reached his skin. In that moment, Chen Yi felt as if his body no longer belonged to him, losing all control and becoming another lifeless corpse, his consciousness and thoughts threatening to vanish.

Guo Fan's ghost had attacked Chen Yi at that moment.

Whatever the ghost's pattern of killing had been, it was irrelevant now.

Because the ghost had started its onslaught.

"Damn it," Chen Yi thought with a mix of shock and anger.

His slightly relaxed skin writhed as if it were old, torn fabric, spotted black and blue as if bruised, or as if marked by decay, but most of all, it was the indelible mottle of decay.

Without hesitation, Chen Yi tapped into the power of his own ghost.

The moment he made contact with the ghost, he had almost been killed. If he had not been a ghost tamer, he would already be dead, without any chance of being alive.

But even now, although he wasn't dead, he was in a lot of pain.

The movements of Chen Yi's skin became more and more pronounced as though another person was attached beneath it. The outlines of hands, feet, and facial features became distinct beneath the skin.

In fact, this skin was not his own.

No, to be precise, most of the skin on Chen Yi's body wasn't his; it belonged to a ghost.

Ghost Skin Chen Yi.

That was his codename.

As the human skin on his body continued to writhe, Chen Yi felt his body slowly regaining sensation, and the cold feeling quickly receded.

Yet, that stiff, corpse-like hand was still firmly gripping his arm.

"Ah!"

Chen Yi's face twisted into a ferocious expression, unable to hold back a painful howl.

Ghost Skin bore a significant cost to fend off Guo Fan's ghostly assault—his skin began to dull, fade to ash, and became mottled with deathly patches at a rate visible to the naked eye. The Ghost Skin further eroded Chen Yi's body, giving him the sensation that his skin was being torn off bit by bit.

This agony, akin to a living person flaying their own skin from inside out, was beyond comprehension.

Yet, the heavy price did not bring safety. Under normal circumstances, the moment the Ghost Skin on Chen Yi's body came into contact with a fierce ghost, it would have caused the ghost to temporarily retreat, ceasing the attack.

But now.

The ghost unleashed by Guo Fan still clung to him, refusing to let go; the Ghost Skin was simply no match for it.

If this continued, Chen Yi would soon die from the fierce ghost's resurgence.

There was no hope.

However, Guo Fan's ghostly attack was just one of the crises he faced.

As Chen Yi desperately resisted, five other ghosts had already approached him...

Whether it was because he was being attacked or for some other reason, these five ghosts did not attack him upon reaching his side, but instead headed towards Zong Shan.

Nobody could imagine what would happen when these five ghosts targeted Zong Shan, a ghost manipulator.

But it definitely wasn't anything good.

"Crack, crack, crack," noise as of bones snapping filled the air.

The ghost clutching Chen Yi's arm was now drawn to the Ghost Candle, its body turning numbly half around as if its spine was broken, forcibly twisting itself halfway before finally turning that pale, bloodless death's face towards Zong Shan.

The moment Zong Shan was watched by this ghost, he felt a surge of horror.

At this moment, he even thought the ghost released by Guo Fan from the spirit tablet photo was more dangerous than the ghost that emerged from a ghost painting.

"Whoosh!"

Without any hesitation, Zong Shan blew out the remaining Ghost Candle in his hand, daring not delay any longer.

By now,

the previously almost successful ghost-luring plan can be declared a failure—all two Ghost Candles had been extinguished, and even if more were lit later, it was impossible to lead the ghosts forward as smoothly as before.

Just as their plan failed at this location,

in another unknown area within the Ghost Domain,

Li Jun and the others, after a long period of fleeing and repeated confrontations with ghosts, had depleted far too much.

Even though they had not yet reached the verge of the fierce ghosts' resurgence, if they couldn't find a way to escape this place, the entire team would assuredly perish in Huanggang Village of this ghostly realm.

Moreover, with the ghost paintings spreading, there were fewer and fewer places in Huanggang Village where they could take temporary refuge.

"This is the last house, we are back at the village entrance." Su Fan, slightly out of breath, clutched his mobile phone tightly, his face extremely pallid.

After circling the village and narrowly escaping death multiple times, the group had returned to their initial entry point.

In front of them stood an old brick-and-tile house.

The front door of the house was wide open, leading to a dimly lit interior. Through the murky hall, one could make out an old grass rope hanging from the beam, with a corpse dangling from it.

The corpse, its back to the door, swayed slightly in the half-light, exuding an unimaginable aura of eeriness and terror.

Without a doubt, there were ghosts inside this last unexplored house.

Now they faced a difficult choice.

"What time is it now?" asked Li Jun, his body emitting a scorched smell as if he were a charred corpse, his voice becoming extremely hoarse.

"There are three minutes left until the next scheduled door opening time," said Leuk San, who had been keeping track of the time. His sallow face was devoid of any sense of urgency, oddly calm.

"This is our last chance. That house has yet to be corrupted by the ghost painting and there's still a door present. We can't go anywhere else; we must get through this Haunted house, or we will surely die in the ghost painting. Of course, there's also a high chance of being killed by the Ghost Envoy; though it won't kill people on their own, don't forget, it can restart," stated Xu Yiping, a ghost manipulator, in a low voice.

Li Jun's expression grew grim as he surveyed their surroundings.

In the sky floated grey, ash-like substances. He took a moment to closely inspect his surroundings.

The ground was increasingly littered with drawings, the origin of which they were unaware. It seemed as if they had been there before their arrival, just unnoticed before.

Moreover, the depictions within these drawings grew stranger—twisted shadows, cold corpses, terrifying specters... Each painting seemed to represent a ghost.

The sheer number sparked a feeling of despair.

The dark Haunted house, the grey murky road.

A black and a white world made up the entirety of the village.

The people who had struggled to survive so far were like souls lingering at the gates of hell, already prepared to enter its depths.

The only difference was the hell into which they would be buried.

Though the chance of survival existed, it was meager and furthermore, it was the only one.

Chapter 537 The Dropped Rope

At this moment.

Somewhere at headquarters.

Eight minutes had passed since the door first opened, and there were just two minutes left until the time for the second opening, according to the plan.

Cao Yanhua stood outside the room, silent, with a very grave expression on his face.

The time of the second opening almost determined the life and death of Li Jun's team—if they hadn't come out from the door by then, it could almost be certain that they had been wiped out in the ghost

paintings of the Ghost Domain. As for the third opening... that was nothing more than a final check carried out with the last sliver of hope.

In reality, it wasn't very significant.

Because those who had dealt with supernatural events knew that once targeted by ghosts, be they spirit manipulators or ordinary people, one either fled or was killed.

Surviving for an extended period under attack by ghosts was almost an impossibility.

"One minute and thirty seconds left, please get ready, Old Qin, this time is particularly critical," Cao Yanhua said solemnly, snapping out of his concern.

"Don't worry, I'll pay close attention," said Old Qin from inside the room, his voice hoarse and strangely peculiar.

"Thank you."

Cao Yanhua nodded, then turned to say, "Professor Wang, if this attempt fails, do you have a backup evacuation plan? I hope you're not hiding anything at this point."

Wang Xiaoming did not speak; his face remained calm, even somewhat dull.

Cao Yanhua fell silent; he understood Professor Wang very well.

This guy always had some ulterior motives hidden within his plans. If it had been any other time, Cao Yanhua wouldn't have inquired, since as long as the major issues were resolved, some minor actions were tolerable. However, this time it concerned the life and death of the headquarters' top spirit manipulator team, and any missteps could lead to very bad consequences.

Almost thirty seconds passed before Wang Xiaoming suddenly smiled, "Do you think I should believe the information the ghosts revealed to me, or not?"

"What do you mean by that?"

From his tone, Cao Yanhua could immediately verify that this guy was planning something.

"Nothing much, just that I've made an interesting discovery on the fly, which I think is worth a try," said Wang Xiaoming. "As for the evacuation plan, indeed I did have a backup. I wouldn't possibly rely on this unpredictable door for our exit; that would be irresponsible to everyone."

"I had safety measures in place when I made the plan."

"Hmm?" Cao Yanhua's eyes widened as he looked at him, feeling an urge to curse internally.

No wonder this guy had been so calm the entire time without worry; he had been prepared.

"Why are you only saying this now?" Cao Yanhua held back his anger and gritted his teeth as he spoke.

"Because a potential reality is worth the risk, and I'm saying it now because the time for the second opening is almost here," Wang Xiaoming looked at the time: "Thirty seconds left..."

"Only if the second opening fails will I let Ah Hong lead them out."

Ah Hong?

Cao Yanhua immediately remembered that a seemingly inconspicuous female spirit manipulator had indeed infiltrated Li Jun's team.

"Is she your backup?"

Wang Xiaoming said, "Otherwise, why do you think I would place a seemingly useless person in the team? But Ah Hong is just one of the safeguards, and I've considered the possibility of her failing, so..."

"So you've made a second safety measure? Who is it? Leuk San? Su Fan? Or is it Li Jun? No, not Li Jun—I know his character very well. He's the kind who cares about the bigger picture and wouldn't join you in

something so risky." Cao Yanhua was astonished and unsettled, never expecting this man to have prepared so many backups.

Had he been needlessly worrying for hours?

"The details are not important; what matters is they'll safely retreat after the second door opens. That's enough," Wang Xiaoming's gaze moved to the room.

Through the yellowed glass, the old wooden door with peeling red paint vibrated slightly, as if some unpredictable eeriness was attempting to open it from the inside.

"Ten seconds left."

"Damn it," Cao Yanhua really wanted to scold Wang Xiaoming but didn't make a fuss at such a critical moment—after all, the time for the second opening had arrived.

He hoped everything would go smoothly as Wang Xiaoming had said and that Li Jun and the others could be safely rescued.

If the overall situation was stable, the smaller issues could be overlooked.

Old Qin in the room was also ready now. His murky eyes shifted slightly as he got up again, leaning on his walking stick, and walked over to the old wooden door.

To him, this door, no matter how eerie, was unlikely to kill him.

Therefore, his role as the door opener couldn't have been more fitting.

But before this.

Inside the mysterious Huanggang Village.

This place was the village's last remaining dwelling, with other houses showing signs of being eroded by the ghost paintings all around, countless oddities emerging from every corner of the village. Fallen picture frames littered the ground, shadows hiding in the dark, and heaps of ashen-white paper ash fluttering down from the sky.

All of these signs seemed to inform the last few remaining people that the ghosts of the ghost paintings had set their sights here.

Therefore, everything here would soon cease to exist.

And the only things that could survive this attack of the ghost paintings were definitely not humans, but ghosts.

The last remaining house was a common brick and tile bungalow from the rural 80s. Because the building was old, the main hall appeared much darker and more peculiar than other houses. Its gaping windows were half-open, emitting deathly stillness and a kind of strange eeriness. Just one glance at the entrance of this dwelling was enough to send shivers down the spine.

Moreover, it had been verified upon entering the village that there were indeed ghosts in this old brick and tile house.

In the center of the house's main hall, an old hemp rope dangled from the wooden beam overhead, simultaneously suspending the outline of an indistinct corpse that hung motionless in midair.

A nauseating stench of decay pervaded the air, as if the person who had hung themselves had been dead for over a week, perhaps even longer. The foul odor emanating from the corpse was a source of utmost dread, and what was most alarming was that despite the lack of even the slightest breeze in such an environment, the hanging corpse was swaying slightly.

It oscillated back and forth, occasionally rotating.

Li Jun's face was charred, and a strange green light glimmered in his eye sockets, like a corpse that had crawled out of a grave, terrifying and shocking.

"Be careful, this house is very special. The whole Huanggang Village has been affected except for this house, which has remained untouched until now. There must be a reason. We're approaching the second door-opening time, and I don't want to lose anyone at this crucial moment. You all are top ghost handlers, and losing any of you would be a huge loss for headquarters. Let's hold on a little longer and leave this place alive together," he said.

While alerting the others, Li Jun did not hesitate to lead the way.

There was no need to worry about personal circumstances at this time.

If one couldn't leave this old brick and tile house alive, then they would have to die here.

Behind him, Su Fan, Leuk San, Ah Hong, and the others remained silent.

Soon.

The team stepped over the somewhat rotten wooden threshold and into the old brick-and-tile bungalow.

Just setting foot inside, a chilly coldness seeped through the soles of their shoes into their feet and then spread throughout their bodies, causing an involuntary shiver.

The living room floor was not made of concrete but of dark-colored earthen ground, which inherently gave off a cold feeling. Staying in a house with such flooring for an extended period would make anyone feel uncomfortable. This type of structure had ceased to exist a long time ago, yet here stood one still.

But right now, the team was not concerned with the state of the house; they were more focused on what was inside it.

Especially the corpse hanging in the middle of the living room.

The body continued to sway slightly, and even in the dim surroundings, they could make it out a bit more clearly now.

But all they could see was a pair of feet dangling in mid-air.

Stiff, pale, covered in postmortem lividity, some areas already blackening and rotting.

"Just keep an eye on that thing for now. Don't worry about it yet; after all, it hasn't shown any anomalies. Our time is almost up. The pressing matter is to find a door..." Li Jun's charred face was lit by the Ghost Flame in his eyes, and the surrounding darkness could not obstruct his sight.

He quickly scanned the surroundings, trying to spot a door.

Any door would do.

Found one!

Li Jun's spirits lifted as he saw a gray wooden door to the right of the living room. The lower half of the door was covered in green moss, as though it had been left damp and abandoned for a long time.

But that didn't matter as long as the door was intact.

"We have one minute left until the agreed time. As long as we're unharmed for this last minute, we can leave..." Li Jun promptly said.

But before he could finish, his eyes suddenly narrowed.

Now he saw Leuk San in their team inexplicably climbing up the corpse hanging in mid-air.

The body, due to his weight and the intense clambering, swung violently in mid-air.

The old wooden beams creaked and groaned.

The putrid stench of decay in the air became even thicker.

"Damn it, Xu Yiping, what are you doing right now? Do you want to kill us all? Su Fan, Ah Hong, won't you stop him?" Li Jun shouted, both shocked and angry.

At that moment, Leuk San spoke, "Li Jun, you have your mission, and I apologize, but I have mine too. After searching Huanggang Village for so long, we finally found him. I thought Professor Wang was just talking, but it turns out it's real. Even though this might put us in danger, I believe we can withstand the last minute."

Ah Hong, standing nearby, remained silent, taking out a red Ghost Candle.

Li Jun was stunned by this scene.

It was clear from their actions that they had previously coordinated, otherwise they wouldn't be working together so seamlessly.

But Leuk San mentioned Professor Wang, and the red Ghost Candle in Ah Hong's hand was also an important resource not included in the plan.

As Wang Xiaoming's bodyguard, even if Li Jun was slow to react, he now understood.

Professor Wang had arranged another mission for others.

To be executed at the right moment.

"You should have told me earlier," Li Jun couldn't help but bellow.

But it was too late to dwell on that now.

"Bang!"

The Ghost Rope on the beam either lost its restraint or had been undone by Leuk San, and suddenly went slack, causing the corpse that was suspended in mid-air to fall heavily to the ground.

The Ghost Rope twisted on the ground, and the once-reviving strange object was now eerily calm, with one end still lying on the corpse.

At that moment, the corpse seemed to come back to life, beginning to show signs of movement.

Ah Hong, who was unnoticeable at the moment, had already lit the Ghost Candle.

The eerie candlelight burned fiercely, proving that ghosts were present by its speed of combustion.

The green flame cast a light on Ah Hong's face, making half of her face look unusually foreign... more than foreign, that half face wasn't even a woman's, but a strange man's pale and lifeless face.

Chapter 538 The Team That Emerged

There was only about one minute left until the second opening of the door.

Li Jun had thought that there would be no trouble during this time before the door opened, even though the old brick house exuded a strange aura everywhere. As long as the Ghost Paintings hadn't invaded this place, their safety could be ensured.

Unexpectedly, just as he let down his guard slightly, his teammates started to cause trouble.

Seeing the corpse that had previously been hanging from the beam now fallen to the ground, Li Jun's heart leaped.

He remembered the rope scattered on the floor; although it was just an old straw rope, it was also a ghost. Once revived, it would immediately start killing indiscriminately. Before, Yang Jian had suppressed it, so it hadn't caused major problems, but after the Ghost Envoy incident at the base, Yang Jian had lost the Ghost Rope.

But what concerned him even more was the corpse on the floor, emitting a strong stench of decay.

This corpse had been dead for who knows how long, and all information about its identity was unclear; it was suspected to be an unknown ghost.

No, it was definitely a ghost.

Only a ghost could keep the Ghost Rope calm until now.

Previously, the rope and the corpse must have been in a state of absolute balance, with the two ghosts constraining each other, unable to move freely.

But now... Leuk San had personally broken that balance.

"Forty seconds left," Li Jun said with a gloomy face, his tone slightly irritated.

Blaming now was useless. Ah Hong had already lit the Ghost Candle. Surviving this last period shouldn't be hard. Even if the two ghosts in this house became active, they couldn't possibly kill them all in such a short period of time.

He was angry because these teammates had disobeyed orders, acted recklessly, and brought huge potential danger to the entire team.

If it had been before, Li Jun would have wanted to kill Leuk San himself.

"I know, as soon as time is up, we'll proceed with the plan. Don't worry, I won't cause any trouble for everyone." Leuk San's sallow and sickly face showed a hint of uncertainty.

His gaze lingered on the corpse on the ground.

"Professor Wang's speculation is somewhat crazy, but since we're at this point, we have no choice but to try... Taking the risk is worth it, considering we don't lose much even if we fail," thought Leuk San.

He was not someone who liked recklessly courting death; it was just that the stakes offered by Wang Xiaoming were rather tempting, plus there was the support of a Ghost Candle.

So, this one minute was worth the wait.

At this moment.

The red candle in Ah Hong's hand burnt rapidly, its flame flickering in the cold hall. Time seemed to slow down, with every second feeling so prolonged.

Although it was just the last few seconds, everyone was well aware that if an anomaly occurred and the ghosts started killing, no one could be absolutely certain of surviving.

And then there was the variable of the Ghost Painting.

The time came to the last twenty seconds.

Just at this moment, changes began to occur in the cold hall.

The old and darkened walls unexpectedly began to show a hazy gray color, the surrounding darkness peeling off like wallpaper, bit by bit. The world outside the door seemed to have started raining, with countless ashes drifting and tending to spread towards them.

And with the change of light, the group frighteningly realized that the earthen floor of the hall they were standing on had vaguely become a giant picture frame.

The uneven ground, like the wrinkles on an old man's face, sketched out a terrifying visage.

Not only that, but the corpse, which had been motionless, was now beginning to move ever so slightly.

"Huh!"

The Ghost Candle in Ah Hong's hand burned even more fiercely, the flame consuming the wick much faster than before, making it difficult for the candle to last three minutes.

Although the ghost had not yet attacked the group, these signs indicated that once the Ghost Candle went out, and if they couldn't pass through the door to leave this place in time, the likelihood of being wiped out was absolutely one hundred percent.

Even the Ghost Domain of the Ghost Envoys couldn't withstand the invasion of Ghost Painting, let alone a ghost controller.

"Ten seconds left," Li Jun's voice remained calm, showing no signs of panic.

The frequency of the corpse's movement on the ground increased, as if a wind-up machine had started working.

"Let's go," said Leuk San as he shifted his gaze away from the corpse.

It seemed the outcome was not as smooth as Professor Wang had imagined.

The Ghost Candle in Ah Hong's hand was already more than half burnt. She remained silent, but her face was becoming less and less like herself; she had vaguely started to transform into someone else.

To ensure survival, she had to use her own ghostly powers.

The door was too big of an uncertainty.

At this moment, Li Jun couldn't care about much else. He had reached the nearly rotten wooden door, and in his hand, he held something unnoticeable until now.

It was a door handle with mottled red paint.

This was a component from some door.

To open the correct door at the correct time required a certain medium, and the door handle in Li Jun's hand was taken from the door at headquarters.

Usually, carrying it on oneself posed no harm, but special care was needed every time the door was opened. If one wasn't careful, they could mistakenly enter the world behind the Ghost Gate, and whether one could survive to come back out depended on luck.

Li Jun placed the door handle on the door and then stared fixatedly at the time on his watch.

When the final second of the designated time for the second door opening came, he pushed the door open without hesitation.

An eerie scene occurred as the door opened.

Behind the door was not the scene inside the old brick house, but a darkness like mist.

"Did it work?" Li Jun was somewhat uncertain.

It was his first time using this thing, and he didn't fully understand the situation before him, but his instinct told him it should be connected to some place—whether it could follow the plan to get back to headquarters, he had no idea.

After all, these strange things all possessed a great deal of uncertainty, but at least it was better than dying trapped here.

"Hurry, everyone follow me and leave this place; the door is open."

Li Jun didn't rush out himself but turned back quickly to urge everyone else.

Su Fan looked at his mobile phone; the dim screen showed a small figure with a door in front of it. Light emitted from the doorway, seemingly signaling an escape route.

Without any hesitation, he stepped through the door.

Leuk San followed behind without saying a word.

"I'll blow out the Ghost Candle to prevent accidents,"

Ah Hong approached the door, not holding the Ghost Candle as she entered because she could avoid the interference the ghost's candle flame might cause to the door. At this critical moment, nobody wanted an accident to happen.

Li Jun nodded in agreement.

Ah Hong's words were a reminder.

The next moment.

The Ghost Candle was extinguished, and Ah Hong's figure rushed into the door along with Xu Yiping.

Li Jun was the last to enter.

However, as soon as he set foot inside, his body suddenly froze, and a terrifying feeling surged in his heart.

For Li Jun felt a sudden heaviness on his shoulder.

A cold, stiff, unknown hand had grabbed him from behind.

The familiar and intense stench of decay washed over him.

"It's the corpse from the hall... Damn it, has that ghost targeted me just within three seconds of extinguishing the Ghost Candle?"

Li Jun immediately realized what it was that had grabbed him from behind.

Meanwhile.

Unaware of the mishap that had befallen Li Jun at the back, Su Fan, who was walking ahead, was more worried about what dangers might be lurking in the pitch-black darkness.

But things didn't happen as quickly as imagined.

Instead of danger approaching, he saw a glowing exit.

It looked like... the shape of a door.

"It's the way out," Su Fan thought immediately of the guidance from the message on his phone as he saw this.

He hastened his steps without daring to linger in the darkness or to lose his way blindly.

Soon.

Su Fan was the first to cross through the glowing door.

As he did, he was surprised to find himself in a special room.

The room was empty except for an old wooden door standing on the ground, and an old man with a walking stick standing in front of it.

"Oh, you made it out? It seems this door opening was quite successful," the old man said with a hint of surprise, seemingly not expecting the second door opening to go so smoothly.

"Is that you, Old Qin?"

As Su Fan looked around, he immediately noticed Deputy Minister Cao Yanhua standing by the windows of this sealed room.

"Although the thing is not very stable, at least we came back alive," Leuk San came out from behind the door, quickly realizing the environment he was now in.

If they were not mistaken, this place must have been some kind of underground base of headquarters.

"Damn, next time I definitely won't stake my life on this thing; it's too hard to seize the moment to leave," Xu Yiping came out, heaving a sigh of relief and then spoke with a hint of fear.

Three chances to open the door, with the first ending in failure. If the second attempt had also failed, they would've had to wait an hour for the third.

They couldn't possibly survive for an hour.

"Being alive is good enough. If it weren't for this door, we would never have gotten out of that damned place. The Ghost Domain depicted by the ghost painting is too bizarre; you'd get lost as soon as you entered," Su Fan whispered, "Luckily, we didn't have direct contact with the ghost from the painting this time, or else we wouldn't have had the chance for a second door opening."

Seeing them emerge one by one, Cao Yanhua's face lit up with joy, his expression becoming slightly excited.

Although this plan hadn't been perfectly accomplished, at least they had temporarily resolved the Ghost Envoy incident, and the team had made it back alive.

"That was a narrow escape, a narrow escape. We made it back alive. Professor Wang, now it all comes down to Chen Yi," Cao Yanhua turned and said.

But at this moment, Wang Xiaoming's brow was furrowed, showing no joy.

"What's wrong? Aren't you satisfied with this outcome?" Cao Yanhua asked again.

"The time to close the door is nearly up, and Li Jun hasn't appeared yet, and..." Wang Xiaoming stopped short.

It was then that Cao Yanhua suddenly realized, among the team of four, everyone had safely walked out except for Li Jun.

"No way, could he have died in there?"

A horrible thought popped into his mind.

The loss of Li Jun would be a tremendous blow for the headquarters.

The second door opening could only last for thirty seconds.

With just a few seconds left, Old Qin was about to close the door to prevent the ghosts from breaking through.

The first time they had opened the door, they allowed a full minute, and within that minute at least three ghosts attempted to invade, and the invasion speed for the second time would be faster than before, hence the need to reduce the door opening time accordingly.

For the third opening, managing to keep the door open for ten seconds would be impressive.

"I'm going to close the door in five seconds. If anyone hasn't come out by then, that's unfortunately too bad," Old Qin's face, full of wrinkles and liver spots, showed a numbness, as though he wouldn't alter the plan just because someone had failed to appear.

Deputy Minister Cao Yanhua kept a stern face and didn't object, clearly giving tacit approval to Old Qin's action.

If Li Jun failed to emerge as planned, he couldn't risk the safety of everyone in the room.

But just at this moment, clear footsteps came from behind the door.

"It's Li Jun, wait on closing the door. He's about to come out, I knew he wouldn't be in trouble..." Xu Yiping said hastily.

"Hm?" However, immediately after, everyone's expressions tensed up, and the relaxed atmosphere became fraught once more.

"Step, step! Step, step!"

The footsteps coming from behind the door were not of one person but two...

If one was Li Jun, then who was the other?

Chapter 539

The time allotted for the second door opening was only thirty seconds, and although the time had not yet elapsed, the abnormality behind the door had already tensed up everyone in the room.

Two sets of footsteps.

Almost overlapping, though not easily distinguishable, for those often dealing with the supernatural, such abnormalities were very easy to discern.

Was there a ghost following behind Li Jun?

That was the thought in everyone's minds, which then shifted to the corpse they had encountered in the old brick and tile house just moments before.

However...

Leuk San's gaze shifted subtly; to him, there were two other possibilities.

Perhaps, behind the door wasn't Li Jun and a ghost but two ghosts, and Li Jun had died.

As for the third possibility...

Leuk San then turned his gaze to Wang Xiaoming, who was standing at the end of the corridor outside the room. If the information provided by Professor Wang before was true, then something inconceivable was about to occur.

The seconds ticked by.

The footsteps behind the door grew clearer, without any pause in between.

Suddenly, the dim red door frame shook violently as if something was leaning on it from behind.

"Something's about to come out," Su Fan said, glancing at his phone to give everyone a heads up.

But the phone's screen showed no alerts; just two overlapping silhouettes behind a faintly illuminated door frame, neither signaling danger nor the death of a character with red letters, seemingly just a normal phenomenon.

The next moment.

From the blackness behind the doorframe, one that obscured any clear sight, a human leg stretched out.

The leg was clad in dirty, slightly tattered long pants, and through the garment's ragged tear, everyone could clearly see that the skin of the leg was no longer the natural hue of a living person; it was discolored, dark and green, much like a corpse that had been left unattended for a long time.

Just a leg, akin to one of the dead emerging, filled the tiny room with an overpowering stench of decay.

Was it a ghost?

In an instant, everyone's complexion turned ashen.

The worst scenario had unfolded.

The first to emerge wasn't Li Jun, but a ghost.

Thus, it was possible that Li Jun had indeed perished, with the footsteps being a mere deception; they couldn't possibly belong to Li Jun, and undoubtedly the remaining footsteps were also those of a ghost.

"Quick, close the door!" Cao Yanhua, outside the room, cried out with an urgent shout, his face beading with cold sweat.

Sure enough, opening the door a second time was too risky; a ghost emerged in just thirty seconds, though nothing had happened within that time frame during the first opening, where the anomaly only appeared close to a minute in.

"Wait," Wang Xiaoming intervened, preventing the action.

"What?"

Cao Yanhua looked at him in shock: "Are you mad? Do you want whatever's behind the door to invade the room? This is headquarters, if something goes wrong..."

"I know, let it come out," Wang Xiaoming said calmly: "If there's a problem, hold me accountable."

"What exactly are you planning?" Although Cao Yanhua had managed to keep his temper in check before, this time he bellowed at him.

Wang Xiaoming's demeanor suggested to him that the professor must have arranged something behind the scenes, perhaps related to an experiment.

"No matter what, I need a result, it's important," Wang Xiaoming said with rare seriousness.

"More important than human lives in the room?"

Wang Xiaoming succinctly and firmly replied, "Yes."

Their argument, carried by the intercom, reached the clear ears of Su Fan, Leuk San, Xu Yiping, Ah Hong, and Old Qin inside the room.

They could have disregarded the commands of the two men for their own safety and simply closed the door.

As ghost controllers, snap decisions were theirs to make, not to be halted by a mere statement.

But they hesitated.

Because an old man, leaning on a cane and his face speckled with age spots, had blocked the restless few.

A moment's obstruction, barely ten seconds, but the outcome was already evident.

The owner of the rotten leg behind had successfully crossed the darkness and passed through the mysteriously ancient door frame into this room.

The light within the room instantly dimmed, and the air was thicker with the scent of death.

A somewhat emaciated corpse, skin darkened and eyes the color of dead ash, stood rigidly before the group.

"Impossible."

Through the murky yellow glass, Cao Yanhua stared at the emerging corpse, uttering an incredulous gasp.

"This has got to be a joke, he came back to life..." Su Fan clenched his phone tightly, his pupils contracting.

"Is it a person or a ghost?" Leuk San's sickly, sallow face showed a touch of confusion.

The corpse before their eyes was unquestionably the one he had personally cut down from the beam in the old house. Moreover, this corpse was not nameless or an unknown ghost; it had a name in life.

Wei Jing.

But Wei Jing was already dead.

The cause of death... a malevolent ghost's resurrection.

And the resurrecting ghost was none other than the main character of their previous supernatural incident, that terrifying specter known as the Ghost Envoy.

The body stood rigidly in place, its pair of hollow, pale eyes seeming to survey everything in the room.

Everyone felt themselves being watched by this entity, a chilling tremor running through them.

So what was this body now? A ghost... or a human?

"Cough, cough!"

At that moment, a pained cough sounded from behind the old doorframe as Li Jun stepped out, his body charred black. Seeing the others who had left the room earlier, and Old Qin standing in the room, he realized that their plan had succeeded.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Li Jun collapsed to the ground in pain and weakness.

Making it this far without dying from the ghost's resurrection had been lucky.

However, now, overusing the Ghost Domain had caused his body to be further invaded by the Ghost Flame, a pain so intense he could no longer bear it, making it impossible for him to even stand.

"It seems my choice was not wrong; you are indeed still alive, Wei Jing."

Suddenly, Wang Xiaoming's voice came through the walkie-talkie, breaking the deadlock.

"What?"

The next moment, everyone's eyes widened, shocked by this news.

Was this person in front of them really Wei Jing?

"An aberration?" Emotion flickered across Old Qin's wrinkled face.

If Xiao Wang's words were true, then the Wei Jing before them was an aberration like him, one who could control ghosts.

"I should already be dead. Professor, how did you know I was still conscious?" At that moment, the stiff, rotting body that stood before them, Wei Jing, finally spoke.

His voice was strange, as if he was missing vocal cords, and the tone so devoid of warmth it was frighteningly indifferent.

"I received some incredible information from something and decided to conduct an experiment, albeit tentatively."

Wang Xiaoming's voice spread from outside the room, "Though I can't understand the phenomenon of your continued existence, my guess is that the Ghost Envoy's infinite restart, which revives itself, might have also reset you since you died as a result of the Ghost Coffin. There's a chance that you were restarted too. Assuming your reset was successful, then with the intrusion of the Ghost Drawing, it's highly likely that this state could be maintained, after all, the Ghost Envoy couldn't handle you anymore while dealing with the Ghost Drawing."

"So, from the intel I received, there is indeed a possibility that you're still alive. The source of that information was just too bizarre; I needed to conduct further experiments."

"It seems a lot has happened after my death," Wei Jing said coldly, unaware of events that had transpired after his death or any information regarding the Ghost Envoy.

All he knew was that at some point when he regained consciousness, he had been hanging from the beam by a rope.

However, after awakening, Wei Jing was unable to do anything as the old, coarse rope tightened around him, gradually killing his body.

He had thought he would die again, yet while his body grew cold, died, decayed, and stank, his consciousness remained intact.

The body died, but the mind lived on.

Wei Jing found himself in this inexplicable and eerie state.

Until suddenly, a balance was disrupted, and his body was taken down.

The confirmation that Wei Jing was still alive horrified everyone even further.

Is this even possible?

The Ghost Envoy had inadvertently reset Wei Jing to a time when he was still alive?

"Wei Jing, what are you considered now, a human or a ghost?" Su Fan couldn't help asking, glancing at his phone which simply marked "danger."

This confirmed that the corpse-like Wei Jing was still dangerous.

Wei Jing responded in a numb tone, "I'm not sure what I am now... Instead of being a person, it's probably more accurate to say I've become a ghost. I seem to have become part of the Ghost Coffin."

As he spoke, the darkness in the room grew denser.

It was as if a Ghost Domain covered everything, eerily unsettling.

"Don't worry; I need to conduct further experiments," Wang Xiaoming said slowly, his expression becoming more solemn as he stood outside.

Because he was considering another matter entirely.

"It, revealing information to me that Wei Jing is still alive, did it know I would try to rescue Wei Jing, or is Wei Jing's existence a crucial part of its plan? Or is Wei Jing's appearance just to prove that 'it' is trustworthy, with the trap lying in the next step?"

"Of course, I can't rule out the possibility that Wei Jing is a decoy and the intelligence is a decoy too, with the real intent targeting me."

"Does it want to pique my interest, to be studied by me, to break free from Yang Jian's control?"

In an instant, Wang Xiaoming mulled over the significance of the human skin document considerably.

Regardless, borrowing the human skin document from Yang Jian turned out to be quite a surprising gain for him.

"Let's end the discussion here. The matter regarding Wei Jing is classified; no one is to reveal anything to the outside world," Cao Yanhua immediately stopped the others' inquiries.

To be honest, Wei Jing's appearance had also shocked him.

But Cao Yanhua was well aware that now was not the time to dwell on these issues; whether or not Wei Jing was still alive had no impact on the bigger picture. The priority was to complete other tasks.

The issue of Wei Jing would be set aside for now.

Seeing this, Old Qin immediately closed the door, preventing other strange events from occurring.

Chapter 540

"This is bad..."

In the outskirts of the city, on a dimly lit and deserted road, a light murmur could be heard. The nearby ground was smeared with plenty of still fresh blood traces, and a strange, pungent smell of blood wafted through the chilly air.

A person sat weakly by the roadside, panting heavily, his brows furrowed and teeth clenched, seemingly enduring some intense pain.

"An accident still happened, but I really did my best this time. Who would have thought the ghost that Guo Fan released would be so horrifying? I almost couldn't hold on and died right here."

In the dimness, Chen Yi slightly raised his head, his bloodshot eyes staring fixedly at the dark mass slowly moving away in the distance.

Within that receding darkness was a Ghost Candle.

Though it came at a certain cost, in the end, the second Ghost Candle was successfully relit.

Only... the result was far from ideal.

Chen Yi still felt his heart racing as he recalled the prior scene, when he was attacked by Guo Fan's ghost. Zong Shan, afraid of being killed by the ghost painting, simply blew out the Ghost Candle... This led to the ghost that emerged from the ghost painting to lose control for a period of time. Despite the brevity of that moment, he barely survived.

The Ghost Candle was also successfully lit by other ghost manipulators assigned by headquarters for reinforcement.

However, the situation did not revert to its previous state.

After the second Ghost Candle was lit, the number of ghosts attracted was less...

Of the five ghosts that came out from the ghost painting, mysteriously two disappeared, leaving only three to follow behind the Ghost Candle.

"The ghost domain of the ghost painting and the Ghost Envoy's domain have both vanished; the state between the two ghosts has changed. Now, the Ghost Candle's attraction plan has encountered a flaw, and the traces of the two missing ghosts have disappeared. This will be a huge hidden danger... If they are not found soon, the ghost painting incident is likely to erupt again, and this time the location won't be overseas."

Chen Yi closed his eyes in slight pain.

He didn't think there was anything wrong with the plan this time; drawing in the ghost painting to suppress the Ghost Envoy was a great success.

Luring away the ghost painting also had no issues.

But something went wrong with Guo Fan's part—why had the ghost already lost control when he was not yet due to be revived?

"Chen Yi, you look really bad; are you about to die?"

At that moment, suddenly a voice appeared nearby, followed by a figure that seemed to appear out of nowhere, standing eerily in front of him in the next second.

Only then did Chen Yi open his eyes and look up slightly: "Jang Shangbai? Did headquarters send you, someone with a ghost domain, to support us? How is the situation now?"

"You still seem quite rational, so I guess you're not as badly off as I imagined," Jang Shangbai said with a light smile, simultaneously letting go of some of his caution.

If Chen Yi died, he'd be facing more than just one person.

"The situation isn't great but not terrible, the ghost drawing plan is still underway, but the two missing ghosts are nowhere to be found. At least, I've been all around the city and haven't found anything suspicious; those things seem to have completely vanished," Jang Shangbai said, his smile fading as he also slightly furrowed his brow.

"They must have gone into hiding..."

Chen Yi's gaze darkened: "After all, a Ghost Envoy was just handled, and even a ghost painting of such caliber must have been affected. Otherwise, their ghost domains wouldn't have just disappeared out of the blue. Professor Wang's deduction was right; the ghost painting has been suppressed. Right now, the ghost painting's level of danger definitely does not reach that of a true S-class. If nothing unexpected happens, we will resolve two S-class paranormal incidents in one go."

"Makes sense; ghosts naturally suppress each other, especially since Ghost Envoy has an unrivaled ability to suppress other ghosts. It's logical that the ghost painting would be affected," Jang Shangbai nodded. "But accidents are always hard to avoid, aren't they? Although the ideal is to solve two difficult cases, reality does not permit it."

"I think you should stop worrying about this for now, take a rest. The ambulance is on its way."

After speaking, he took another deep look at Chen Yi as he was now.

A vehicle passed by in the distance, and under the illumination of its lights, the figure of Chen Yi, hidden in the darkness, became visible.

He was drenched in blood, with skin no longer visible on his body. Muscles oozing blood were exposed, even his scalp and facial skin had all disappeared, as if someone had brutally skinned him alive, making onlookers' hearts quiver.

Scientifically speaking, with injuries of such severity coupled with the blood loss, Chen Yi would have long been dead. Yet aside from enduring immense pain, he showed no signs of dying.

"Damn useless piece of trash," Chen Yi swore, unable to hold back.

"If it weren't for Guo Fan's issue, none of this would have happened."

"Guo Fan?" Jang Shangbai showed a hint of an amused smile: "He's fine now, having switched back with the ghost. I've confirmed his condition. Though not too good, he's still far from the Hungry Ghost's revival."

"What?" Chen Yi looked at him, somewhat surprised.

Recovered again?

How is that possible?

Without taming a new ghost or using other methods to suppress the revival of the Hungry Ghost, no one had ever reverted from the brink of losing control.

Because the process of a Hungry Ghost's revival is irreversible.

...

At the moment of losing control, death and murder were guaranteed, and a ghost would never be kind enough to spare you again.

"I'm also puzzled, but he indeed came out unscathed," Jang Shangbai shrugged his shoulders.

"Forget it, I don't want to bother with this loser right now. Since his ghost has returned, where is my skin coat?" Chen Yi's gaze shifted slightly, no longer pondering over the special case of Guo Fan.

That matter would naturally be investigated by the headquarters; it was not his concern.

"Still standing over there, I know that thing is dangerous, and I haven't dared to get close," Jang Shangbai said, pointing to a spot not far away.

There, a dim figure stood motionless. If one were to observe closely, they would discover in horror that this was not a person at all, but a complete skin devoid of a body, empty inside. This skin had the appearance and facial features that Chen Yi had earlier.

No, it would be more accurate to say that Chen Yi's appearance was not his own to begin with, it had always been that of the skin coat he presented in front of everyone.

As for Chen Yi's true appearance, probably only he himself or his former relatives and friends would know.

The skin coat stood like a living person near the woods, motionless, but those in the know understood that this skin coat was waiting for a living person to pass by.

Once someone approached within a dangerous range,

The empty skin coat would be forcibly filled by a living person, becoming a part of the ghost.

The rule for murder was quite simple, but when Chen Yi first came into contact with the skin coat, it would not actively stand up on its own.

Now... the skin coat had become increasingly bizarre and uncontrollable.

Chen Yi struggled to his feet and moved towards the skin coat.

He was now inseparable from the ghost; previously, due to an attack from Guo Fan's ghost, the skin coat had been suppressed, and to save his own life, he had to discard the ghost and shed his skin to escape.

However, Chen Yi would not survive long without the skin coat.

He had worn the skin coat for quite some time, and his own body had already been eroded by the ghost to an unrecognizable point. Only by maintaining the previous balance could he stay alive.

Otherwise, within an hour, Chen Yi would die from another ghost revival.

After Chen Yi approached the skin coat, pained howls emanated from the dim woods, as if someone was being brutally forced to sew a skin not their own onto their body, a pain far worse than when he had to tear off his own skin to survive the ghost's attack.

Most people, having gone through such torment twice in one night, would have already taken their own lives; even if they did not, their sanity would collapse, and they couldn't maintain a sound mind.

However, half an hour later, Chen Yi emerged from the dark woods, perfectly intact and calm.

He was neither insane nor had he committed suicide.

"Surviving wasn't easy, was it?" Jang Shangbai spoke up.

Chen Yi did not answer but passed by him and continued walking forward, towards the direction of departure.

He seemed unaffected, yet his slightly slack facial skin and bloodshot eyes lacked some of the liveliness of a human, and had gained an emptiness and numbness closer to that of a genuine ghost.

Jang Shangbai watched him leave without following, instead heading in a different direction.

He still had to ensure the newly lit Ghost Candle did not go out.

He had been protecting Chen Yi, but now after the ghost's attack left him in a bad state, somebody else had to take over.

The horrifying night would eventually dissipate with the passing of time.

The vast majority of the city's residents could not imagine what had happened that night, but when morning arrived, this international metropolis still operated in its usual rhythm.

The neon lights faded, and people rushed to subway stations and bus stops, flooding them like tides to get to work.

The roads were bustling with the sound of honking cars, and there were traffic jams as usual.

However, in the high floors of Ping'an Hotel, it was only when sunlight streamed through the glass into the living room that Yang Jian leisurely emerged from his room.

He stood in front of the large floor-to-ceiling glass window, overlooking the city.

After observing for a moment, Yang Jian slowly retracted his gaze, "It seems that the matter has been more or less resolved, otherwise the city would not be this quiet today. Headquarters still possess some competence, and staying out of it was the right choice."

He thought of his previous missions.

It was not that headquarters lacked the ability to solve them, it was just that he had the misfortune to get caught up in several incidents.

If it weren't for the Hungry Ghost incident, Yang Jian figured he would still be scraping by in Dachang City, certainly not coming here.

"Di di, di di,"

At that moment, his personal phone received a message.

Yang Jian took out his phone and glanced at it, "A message from Li Yao? Good, since the headquarters has handled the Ghost Envoy incident, it's time for me to make a move. I can't avoid it anyway; it's better to take the initiative. Whoever throws the first punch in a fight tends to gain the upper hand."